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POINTS ABOUT THE PRIVATE NURSE

By ANNA A. DAVIDSON

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(Continued from Vol. III., page 940)

SECOND PAPER—THE PERSONALITY OF THE NURSE

NOT long ago I was discussing the question of nurses with a doctor who criticised them very severely. Being driven into a corner in my defence of them, I finally asked him in desperation, "Well, what *do* you consider the all-important attribute of a nurse?" He paused a moment, and then, with a laugh, confessed, "Her personality." Do we not often hear people say a certain nurse is all right during extreme illness, but that they beg to be delivered from her during convalescence? Anyone who has ever had anything to do with a nurses' register knows of the frequent requests for an attractive nurse, a young nurse, a pretty nurse, and although the age and beauty is beyond our control, the attractiveness is not always, and the nurse who possesses it or acquires it need be neither youthful nor pretty to bring sunshine into a sickroom, and she will always be in demand.

Let us begin with her appearance. Of course, it is an indisputable fact that she must be neat, but many carry even that too far. Should a nurse draw her hair smoothly back when it is more becoming loose, especially if the latter is the prevailing fashion? I know of one patient who was very much annoyed by her nurse's hair being crimped and held down on her forehead with a net. It was neat, to be sure, but prim, and at a time when everyone was wearing a pompadour "got on the nerves" of a dainty woman who liked everything pretty.

A nurse should always dress well, but never gaudily, when going to and from her case, for no one wants a dowdy-looking nurse coming into the house, and the street-clothes need as careful attention as the uniform. "The idea of a nurse thinking about her looks! I should think her mind would be on higher things," once said a lady to me. I promptly told her it was a part of my profession, for sick people are very critical, and often their first meeting with the nurse is in her street-clothes, and first impressions go far towards a permanent opinion.

The nurse who pares her nails down to the quick loses sight of an important point: her hands come constantly before the patient's eyes, and should be kept soft and the nails nicely trimmed and manicured. It is essential that a private-duty nurse should be well read in current fiction as well as the standard authors; she should go to the theatre as often as possible, listen to music, visit art galleries,—in fact, keep up

with all the passing events of the day,—in order to be able to converse freely on all subjects. No opportunity should ever be lost to learn; whether it be a subject that interests her or not, she should make a point of storing it away in her mind for future use.

The nurse who each time she finishes anything drops into her chair and becomes absorbed in her book is decidedly annoying during convalescence. That time is just as essential to the patient as when he is tossing in pain, and is the time when the nurse's personality counts for much. She must learn to accommodate herself to circumstances, and she who learns to turn her hand or mind to the whims of the patient, whether it be gardening in the window-box or playing cards, is invaluable.

There are houses where the nurse is needed just as a nurse, and where it is her place to obliterate herself as much as possible outside of her professional duties, and perhaps later in the same house she has to bring forth her personality, enter into the family as one of themselves, act as a balance-wheel to a nervous, excitable family, or bring forth her entertaining powers as a companion.

Can all nurses do this? Can we always forget ourselves enough not to join in a conversation when we are not wanted (and have the intuition to know when we are not wanted), or overcome our own depression enough to cheer someone else?

Above all, can we not all of us cultivate a personality that will please and entertain others, for surely at times entertaining is as much our work as nursing?

A DAY'S WORK OF THE DISTRICT NURSE*

By MAE L. CLEAVES
Head Nurse, Newport, R. I.

IN accordance with a request made by the Charity Organization for some information in regard to the district nursing done by the Newport Hospital I have prepared the following paper:

The district nurse begins her work at seven A.M. and visits the patients in the order of their needs, and not in the order which would suit her own convenience and enable her to finish her day's work with the most speed. Our work includes medical, surgical, and obstetrical cases.

Taking the visits of one day for example, the nurse began her work

* A paper read at the Annual Meeting of the Charity Organization Society, January 20, 1902.